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ABSTRACT

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EFFECTS OF SOCIAL SITUATION ON LANGUAGE USE:

THEORY AND APPLICATION

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Introduction

Foreign language students often find themselves unable to produce appropriate responses in certain social situations. A contributing factor is that until recently, linguists and foreign language educators have concentrated on the student's acquisition of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon), and have not concerned themselves with language usage. The purpose of this paper is to focus attention on the need to teach language students not only what to say, but how to say it and when.

A brief theoretical discussion provides a linguistic background for the presentation of data collected in three foreign countries and the United States. An analysis of the data shows that language students are frequently forced to cope with social situations for which they are not fully equipped. A sample lesson illustrates how sociolinguistic theory can be applied to the development of teaching materials. And finally, specific recommendations are offered for increasing the sociolinguistic proficiency of our students.

Theoretical Background

How spoken language is used depends on a variety of extralinguistic factors, among which are the speaker's intent and his attitude toward the hearer, the social status of the hearer in relation to that of the speaker, the emotional state of the speaker, and other considerations related to the social setting. Polite formulas for use in greetings, introductions, and expressions of gratitude commonly form a part of foreign language courses. But often no mention is made of the intended audience or appropriate social setting for these remarks. Joshua Fishman[1], a pioneer in the field of sociolinguistics, underscores the importance of these factors:

> One of the frequent comments about American travelers abroad is that they know (at most) only one variety of the language of the country they are visiting. As a result they speak in the same way to a child, a professor, a bootblack, and a shopkeeper, thus revealing not only their foreignness, but

also their ignorance of the appropriate ways of signaling local role relationships.

Other linguists refer to "variety" as "style," "key," "register," or "level." Although, as Fishman pointed out, the addressee's role wields strong influence on choice of speech variety, the social context and attitude of the speaker toward the hearer also have a profound effect on appropriate speech usage. Consider the following situation and several possible verbal responses to it:

> You are seated in a crowded waiting room with all seats taken when an expectant mother enters and looks about for an unoccupied seat. Since you are seated very near her, you rise and offer her your seat.
>
> Possible responses:
>
> 1) Here, have a seat.
> 2) Here, take my seat.
> 3) Please have my seat.
> 4) Here, take a load off your feet.
> 5) Okay. I'll be a gentleman. Go ahead, sit down.

Responses (1), (2), and (3) reflect a respectful attitude on the part of the speaker and would be appropriate and interchangeable in this situation. Response (4) would be disrespectful in this context, primarily due to the condition of the addressee. Response (5) reflects reluctance on the part of the speaker, and with an audience of strangers present would probably be interpreted as disrespectful. However, to illustrate how social context and role relationship affect appropriateness of speech usage, one might consider other situations where responses (4) and (5) become courteous statements. Suppose a tired college student drags into his dormitory room after physical education class. His roommate shoves a chair in his direction and says, "Here, take a load off your feet." Now response (4) has become a relatively gracious invitation. Response (5) would reflect courtesy if a teenage girl enters Sunday school class, and all seats are taken. Her gallant younger brother comes to her rescue by rising and saying, "Okay. I'll be a gentleman. Go ahead, sit down." Thus it becomes obvious how complex correct speech usage actually is.

When to say what to whom poses little problem to the native speaker, who has experienced his language in a wide variety of social circumstances. But what of non-natives, whose exposure to the target language has been limited to the classroom, the language laboratory, or to haphazard social encounters in the foreign country? The non-native is unable to put his best foot forward in social situations by making appropriate selections

from a large repertoire of verbal responses. More often than not, he must put his only foot forward and say something which is understandable but that no native speaker would actually say. In desperation, he often translates into the target language what he would say in his native tongue, and the resultant utterance may be unacceptable linguistically as well as socially.

Paulston[2] recounts an incident which illustrates this tendency to translate from the native to the foreign language. Seeking to make a guest feel at home at a social function in Sweden, she translated into Swedish the English cliché, "Do you know everyone?" To her surprise, the guest replied, "I don't know everyone, but if you are asking me if I have greeted everyone, I have."

The universality of communicative problems--linguistic or social--is illustrated in the responses to hypothetical social situations collected from foreign students studying English as a second language at the University of Georgia. Their previous English experience consisted of a mean of 2.7 years' study in their home countries and a mean of fifteen months' residence in the United States. Responses to one of the situations were as follows:

Situation. You and a friend are visiting a strange city when your friend suddenly has terrible stomach pains. Unannounced, you appear with the patient in a doctor's waiting room. You explain the emergency to the receptionist or nurse.

Responses	English Study	US Residence
1) My friend stomach pains because he ate something wrong.	2 years	24 months
2) My friend has a serious sick. It happens immediately.	4 years	12 months
3) I do not know what had happen to him, poor guide. He was find and all of the suddenly those stomach pains have arrived.	4 years	48 months
4) How you can let me wait for a long time.	1 year	3 months
5) Miss! He to swallow a snake in his stomach.	1 year	9 months
6) Execute me. My friend was sick. Please help us to call a doctor or to call the ambulance.	3 years	2 months

7)	I'm sorry sir, but he has terrible stomach pains. And he don't have any family hear. We think it's emergency that the doctor check it immediately because if it's necessary I'll call up his parent for instance if the doctor need to operate him right now.	0 years	24 months
8)	Please, miss, I need the doctor see my friend, he suddenly feels very sick.	4 years	2 months
9)	She is my friend. I don't know what happened she has terrible stomach pains suddenly. Is she all right?	5 years	12 months

It can be seen that in addition to making grammatical and lexical errors, most students lacked subtlety in dealing with the problem. Granted, the emergency nature of this situation makes linguistic finesse unnecessary, but in most social situations the speaker should be able to communicate with greater clarity and sensitivity. He should at least be aware of the possible negative consequences when one says to a stranger, "Execute me."

What is perhaps most unsettling is the fact that the foreign students who had spent a lengthy period in the United States (9-48 months) were among those producing the most unacceptable statements. This suggest that even the foreign resident abroad can disregard learning the kind of language required socially. That is, he can live in the foreign country and be content merely to get by as long as he can make himself understood.

The serious student of a foreign language will eventually encounter social situations where he must be adept at expressing any number of feelings, or where he must use the greatest diplomacy. This is where his foreign language classes too often fail him. The kind of speech he needs involves those factors that Brooks[3] had in mind when he asked as far back as 1960, "In what ways are age, provenance, social status, academic achievement, degree of formality, interpersonal relations, aesthetic concerns, personality reflected in the standard or traditional speech?"

Lakoff[4] also speaks of contextually linked linguistic phenomena such as those which signal politeness, respect, and tact. She suggests that "If one is to teach second language use successfully--so that a non-native speaker can use the language he is learning in a way reminiscent of a native speaker, rather than a robot--then the situations in which forms of this type are usable in a given language must be identified."

The robot analogy is not as far-fetched as it might seem. The talking robot of television and movies speaks in only one neutral tone regardless of the social circumstances surrounding his utterances. The imaginary mechanism implanted in him for producing speech was perfected only to the point that it could produce grammatically correct speech. Foreign language students may not be unlike the robot. The mechanism implanted in them by audio-lingual, cognitive code, or other methods is also capable of generating grammatically correct speech, but it is not perfected to the point where language can be manipulated to fit extralinguistic social contexts.

How then do we identify these situations and the kind of language that they require? We can begin the process by looking at an organizational scheme on speech variation. According to Gleason[5], linguists are interested in three types of speech variation:

1) The more or less fixed characteristics of speech determined by a person's background and group affiliations. These change very slowly, if at all, and are dictated by a person's regional provenance, social class, educational status, profession, age, sex, and religious and political affiliations.

2) Variation in speech as it is adjusted to the hearer (his status, sex, education, etc.).

3) Social situation (particularly the immediate interpersonal relationship between the speakers as understood by them at the moment).

Gleason is speaking of English, but it seems safe to assume that his observations concerning language variation apply to other languages as well. He categorizes all speech variation into five convenient and useful categories that he calls "keys": intimate, casual, consultative, deliberative, and oratorical. A basic criterion for classifying speech in this way is the spontaneity of the utterance or the degree to which syntax and lexical items are consciously structured and selected before emission.

In "intimate" key, there is little, if any, conscious planning of sentence structure or lexical item selection. Sentences in the intimate key are spontaneous, and they constitute a private language reserved for family members and close friends.

The language of casual key is characterized by slightly more planning, but it still constitutes spontaneous language usage and signals informality. It implies complete rapport between speaker and listener. It is characterized by the use of slang and assumes that participants in the exchange share the background information necessary for comprehension.

Consultative key is the language of everyday business. Because it is planned only a few words in advance, constructions are often changed in the middle of a sentence with heavy use of the conjunction and.

Deliberative key is the type of speech commonly used when the speaker addresses a group of people. It requires whole sentences planned in advance. When used with a single hearer, it always indicates distance. Because the speaker plans ahead, structure is more complex and varied than in consultative key. Structure is also more sharply defined.

Oratorical key is the language of formal speeches and declamations. Not only are individual sentences carefully planned, but sequences of sentences follow logical order.

To a greater or lesser degree, all native speakers of a given language have control over several of these keys. They can speak spontaneously in intimate, casual, and consultative keys, and--with practice--in deliberative and oratorical keys. The non-native speaker, on the other hand, is less flexible. His speech usually lacks spontaneity, since he must concentrate not only on the message, but on how to transmit it in a grammatically correct fashion. Thus, he tends to overlook the extralinguistic factors which would make his utterances socially appropriate.

Data Collection

The difficulty of applying to the foreign language classroom the effects of social situation on language usage is that teaching materials for that purpose are conspicuously absent. Situations as well as the applicable language patterns most often used by native speakers need to be identified.

As a first step toward resolving this problem, Cheek[6] identified sixty such situations and collected responses from thirty German Gymnasium students. Several of Cheek's situations were translated into English, French, and Spanish and administered to native speakers in Athens (Georgia), Paris, and Lima to provide for a collection of responses across four cultures. Responses to the situations in all four languages were given by students 16 to 18 years old, an age spread common to high school and beginning university students.

The native speakers were asked to write their responses instead of giving them orally--an obvious limitation in the data collection. It is recognized that responses given in writing may not be identical in construct to oral replies. However, to reduce the effects of the writing factor as much as possible, as well as to elicit replies approaching those of oral speech, the following instructions

were given in the foreign language:

Instructions:

Read the following situations and try to imagine yourself in each situation. Then write what you would say in each situation. Try to express yourself naturally, as if you were giving your answers orally instead of in writing. Don't concern yourself with correctness of style or punctuation. We are only interested in the words you would actually use in the given situations.

Instructions were followed by the sample situation below:

Situation: You are seated having coffee with several friends in a cafe when it suddenly occurs to you that you forgot to call your friend Bob. You stand and say:

Possible answer: Gotta call Bob. Be back in a minute.

The sample situation and possible response translated into the foreign language were included with the instructions to encourage respondents to be free to use colloquial speech.

Included in the concept of colloquial speech is the freedom to use sentence fragments. Eppert discusses the difference between "acceptability," i.e., responding in complete sentences, and "common usage." Consider the following reply in place of the possible answer given in the sample above:

I must call my friend Bob. I will be back in a few minutes.

Although this second possibility is grammatically acceptable and would bring joy to the heart of the student's English teacher, native Americans would probably use the grammatically incomplete utterance, "Gotta call Bob. Be back in a minute." It represents common usage and command of the casual speech variety used among friends in such a situation.

In identifying social situations and collecting the kind of speech used by native speakers in response to them, it was anticipated that replies would contain linguistic patterns which would be pedagogically useful in the construction of teaching materials. Results fulfilled these expectations. Listed below are various situations and replies to each, followed by a discussion of salient linguistic features. For brevity, two items are given in Spanish, German, and French respectively.

Situations were built around three keys: casual, consultative, and deliberative. Intimate key was not included because it is

rarely used in public. Oratorical key was omitted because it is used only in formal speeches.

Responses in Four Languages to
Structured Social Situations

1. SPANISH

A. Situation #1 (expected response: consultative key)[8]
El viejo profesor Gonzalez ha dado otra vez una fecha equivocada de un invento. Levantas la mano y en forma diplomática le dices que el invento fue hecho en 1869 y no en 1865.

(Your teacher, old Mr. Gonzalez, has given the wrong date for an invention again. You raise your hand and tell him politely that the invention was made in 1869 and not in 1865).

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)*	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Wasn't it (the invention) made in 1869?	11	36
2) Excuse me.	6	20
3) I believe . . .	3	10
4) Was it invented (that invention) in 1869 or '65?	2	7
5) Miscellaneous	11	36

Spanish Patterns of Native Peruvians (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Profesor (Señor). (Professor, Sir.)	30	100
2) Disculpe (Dispense, Perdone, Perdón). (Excuse me.)	16	53
3) Fue hecho en . . . (It was made in . . .)	13	43

*Total times appearing will not necessarily equal thirty because one response could contain more than one pattern.

4) Está equivocado (se ha equivocado). (You are mistaken.)	8		27
5) Creo que (me parece que) se ha confundido. (You have gotten it mixed up.)	3		10
6) Miscellaneous	6		20

Discussion. Although responding students were unwilling to accept a factual error, the way they responded revealed a strong pattern of respect toward their professor. All thirty Spanish-speaking respondents prefaced their remarks with the word profesor or señor. In contrast, the English replies of native Americans revealed a conspicuous absence of this kind of language use, a behavior which, to the native Spanish speaker, smacks of rudeness and disrespect.

In order to determine possible carry-over of this American pattern to Spanish as a second language, this same social situation was given to 19 American college students completing their foreign language requirement in an intermediate Spanish course. Only nine students (47 percent) addressed the professor politely with the word señor. Use of profesor in direct address was apparently unfamiliar to the respondents and was not used by any of them.

Further analysis shows that for the most part, the American students of Spanish were able to communicate their basic message but encountered some difficulty with grammar (e.g., fue hacido for fue hecho).

Somewhat surprising was the fact that five students did not respond to the item at all. Considering that as much time as was needed was given for answering all items, and also that this item was the only one of the total ten which went unanswered by these five students, it seems a strong possiblity that omission was due to the students' lack of the necessary language elements and syntax.

Another observation which seems of value is that more than one-half of the native Spanish-speaking respondents in Peru added to their politeness the expression disculpe (excuse me) or an equivalent (dispense, perdone, perdón) before correcting their professor. Again, in contrast, this practice was not generally found among English patterns of native Americans. A total of 80 percent of these students failed to preface their replies with "excuse me." Possible transfer from English can be seen from the fact that the polite expression was said by only three American students of Spanish (16 percent).

A general leaning toward politeness is evidenced by the expressions many of the native Spanish speakers used to soften their

comments: según he leído (according to what I read), me parece que (it seems to me that), creo que (I believe that), según estoy enterado (my understanding was), si mal no recuerdo (if I remember correctly). A few native American students responding in English as well as some American students of Spanish also tried to approach the situation tactfully. Of the latter, four students made use of the expression creo que. Perhaps others, had they known these Spanish expressions, would also have done so. Hence, learning these "softening expressions" appears to be important if students are to be equipped for polite talk in the second language.

Below is a complete list of the Spanish responses of the American students:

1) Señor, la invencion fue hacido en 1869, no fue hacido en 1865.
2) Por favor, Señor, creo que la invencion fue hacido en 1869.
3) Mr. Gonzalez, por que el ano 1865.
4) La invencion era ha en 1869.
5) La invencion fue hacido en mil ochocientos sesenta y nueve.
6) Pardoname Senor, pero la fetcha de la invention no es mil ochocientos sesenta y cinco, es mil ochocientos sesenta y nueve.
7) Señor, no era la fecha 1869, ni 1865.
8) El libro dice que el año era 1869, no 1865.
9) Creo que el date es mil ochocientos sesenta y nueve, not mil ochocientos sesenta y cinco.
10) Excuse mi Señor Gonzalez Lo invention esta.
11) Señor, creo què la fecha no es 1865, sino 1869, ¿está verdad?
12) Señor, estas seguro que la fecha es 1865?
13) Señor, yo creo que la fecha del invercion es 1869, no 1865.
14) Pardonme, Señor, ¿no fue la fecha 1869?
15-19) (No responses)

B. Situation #2 (expected response: casual key)

Tu amiga Ana tuvo dificultad al principio para acostumbrarse a las cosas de la escuela. La ayudaste y ella te sorprende con un regalo. Le das las gracias por el detalle.

(Your acquaintance, Ann, had difficulty at first getting accustomed to things at your school. You helped her and she surprises you with a gift. You thank her for it.)

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) You shouldn't have done that.	9	30
2) Thanks (a lot).	9	30

3) You didn't have (need) to do (it, that).	7	23
4) Thank you.	6	20
5) This (it) wasn't necessary.	3	10
6) Thank you very much.	3	10
7) That was nice (sweet) of you.	2	7
8) Miscellaneous	2	7

Spanish Patterns of Native Peruvians (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Gracias. (Thank you.)	19	63
2) No te hubieras molestado. (You shouldn't have bothered.)	10	33
3) ¿Por qué te has molestado? (Why did you bother?)	6	20
4) De todas maneras, gracias. (Thank you, anyway.)	3	10
5) No has debido molestarte. (You shouldn't have bothered.)	2	7
6) Lo hice desinteresadamente. (I did it without expecting anything in return.)	2	7
7) Te (lo) agradezco. (Thank you.)	2	7
8) Eres muy amable. (You're very kind.)	2	7
9) No era necesario (It wasn't necessary.)	2	7
10) Miscellaneous	6	20

Discussion. Although "thank you" (gracias) was used by native Spanish speakers more than any other form of expression, it was

always given in a larger context of thought (e.g., Gracias, pero no te hubieras molestado). In this respect, the admonition that stands out is that the friend should not have gone to the trouble (haberse molestado). This concern was expressed 18 times--60 percent, see items (2), (3), and (5) above. Of pedagogical interest is that the expression is not one commonly found in teaching materials, yet it represents the kind of message that students tend to want to give (see the English patterns of native Americans above). Hence, an American being surprised with a gift would most likely want to express in Spanish the sentiment "You shouldn't have done it." But would he encounter structural difficulties as well as lack molestarse in his active repertoire of vocabulary? This proved to be precisely the case when American students of Spanish were asked to respond to the situation in their second language. A total of eight students (42 percent) attempted to make some kind of expression equivalent to "You shouldn't have done it,"--see items (7) - (15) below--but they faced structural problems and were apparently unfamiliar with the verb molestarse. Perhaps for this reason, some chose to limit themselves simply to gracias or muchas gracias, but possibly with feelings of frustration or dissatisfaction with their inability to say what they really wanted to.

Below is a complete list of the Spanish responses of the American students:

1) Gracias.
2) Muchas gracias.
3) Muchas gracias por la regalo.
4) Ann, doy gracias por el regalo.
5) Gracias Ann, yo gusto el.
6) Gracias, señorita, por el regalo.
7) O, Ann. No tienes hacer eso. Me gusta mucho.
8) Muchas gracias. No tiene que dar a mi nada.
9) Muchas gracious - Pero Ud. no tiene que hacerlo.
10) Muchas gracias, Ud. no lo habría hecho.
11) Muchas gracias. Pero no tenia que hacer.
12) Muchas gracias. No necesitas hacer eso.
13) Gracias, pero no necesita.
14) Estas muy (sweet). No tienes hacer este.
15) Muchas gracias, pero no es necesario, me te ayuda perque quisé.
16) Gracias, pero no deservo nada para este ayuda.
17) Dios mios - un regalo. Que sopresa (surprise). Muchas gracias.
18) Muchas gracias. Le gusta. Tu es muy simpatica.
19) Muchas gracias, Ann, este es el regalo que necesite.

2. GERMAN

A. Situation #1 (expected response: casual key)

Bei einem Hundert-meter-lauf hat einer von Ihren besten Freunden den ersten Preis gewonnen. Sie gratulieren ihm zu seinem Erfolg.

(One of your best friends has just won first prize in a 100-yard dash. You congratulate him on his success.)

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Congratulations.	9	30
2) That was (is) great.	7	23
3) Way to go.	6	20
4) I knew you could do it.	3	10
5) You did a great job.	2	7
6) Good going.	2	7
7) Miscellaneous	9	30

Patterns of Native Germans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Herzlichen Glückwunsch. (Congratulations.)	12	40
2) Mensch, (das war) Klasse. (Man, that was first class.)	8	27
3) Gratuliere. (Congratulations.)	5	17
4) (Ist ja) sagenhaft. (Legendary.)	5	17
5) Du warst (wirklich, einfach) prima. (You were simply first rate.)	3	10
6) Das hätte ich dir gar nicht zugetraut. (I wouldn't have thought you could do it.)	2	7

7) Mensch, toll. (Crazy, man.)	2	7
8) Miscellaneous	3	10

Discussion. The congratulatory responses in both languages tended to be brief. Noteworthy is the fact that in German one can say "congratulations" with the verb gratulieren used in isolation or with the accusative form herzlichen Glückwunsch. The latter form, preferred by the group of native German respondents, does not appear in most beginning texts. Gratulieren resembles our "congratulations" and is probably preferred by textbook writers for this reason.

Native Germans used terms such as Klasse (first class) (classy), sagenhaft (legendary), or prima (first rate), where Americans responded with "great." The expressions "way to go" and "good going" are nonexistent in German and would be nonsensical if translated literally. Interestingly enough, the Germans and Americans took exactly opposite positions on one response to express their congratulations. Americans responded, "I knew you could do it," and Germans said, Das hätte ich dir gar nicht zugetraut (I really wouldn't have thought you could do it).

American college students in their fourth quarter of German study were asked to respond in German to this situation. Nine responses were obtained. Although the situation only called for brief exclamatory remarks, these students tended to answer with complete sentences. Generally speaking, their command of the German inflectional system was, as might be expected on this level, less than perfect. Commendable, however, was the fact that no mistakes in word order were made.

The German responses formulated by these non-native informants seemed to be constructed on the basis of native language models and German syntactic structures recalled from previous grammar instruction. The Americanism lurking behind the response Glückwünsche! Es war nicht eben knapp! (Congratulations! It wasn't even close!) is a case in point. A tendency which probably harks back to a particularly memorable dose of grammar instruction concerning adjective endings or comparative and superlative degree adjective forms was noted in the Americans' modification of the noun Läufer (runner) with adjectives such as schnell (fast), ausgezeichnet (excellent), der schnellste or am schnellsten (the fastest). Only one native German informant used a similar grammatical structure and thought in his response Du bist ein schneller Junge! (You are a fast guy!).

The words gratulieren, prima, and Glückwünsche appeared in the Americans' as well as the Germans' responses, but with the exception of prima, Americans didn't employ these words in a manner resembling the German usage in this sample.

The complete list of response by American students of German follows:

1) Glückwünsche! Es war nicht eben knapp!
2) Guter Lauf, Herr Eder! Du bist der schnelle Läufer in dem Welt.
3) Ich gratuliere dich. Du bist einen schnellen Läufer.
4) Du bist wunderbar. Du bist am schnellsten.
5) Ich bin sehr stolz auf dir.
6) Ich will sagen, dass Sie Glückwunsch verdienen haben.
7) Prima! Du bist ein ausgezeichneter Läufer.
8) Glückwunsch! Das ist sehr gut!
9) Glückwunsche! Heute die Rennstrecke! Morgen die Welt!

B. Situation #2 (expected response: consultative key)

In Ihrem Zugabteil hat ein Mitreisender das Fenster geöffnet und der eisige Wind bläst Ihnen ins Gesicht. Höflich aber bestimmt bitten Sie um Erlaubnis, das Fenster zu schliessen.

(In your train compartment a fellow passenger has opened the window, and an icy wind is blowing in your face. Politely, but firmly, you ask for permission to close the window.)

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Would you mind closing (if I close) the window?	19	63
2) It's cold (a bit chilly).	5	17
3) Excuse me.	4	13
4) I'm cold (freezing).	3	10
5) The wind (it) is blowing in my face.	3	10
6) Miscellaneous	6	20

Patterns of Native Germans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Mir zieht's. (Es zieht mir) (It's drafty for me.)	14	47
2) (Bitte) machen Sie das Fenster wieder zu. (Please close the window.)	7	23

3) Mir ist es zu kalt. (It's too cold for me.)	3	10
4) Darf ich das Fenster schliessen? (May I close the window?)	3	10
5) Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen, wenn... (Would you mind if...)	2	7
6) Miscellaneous	7	23

Discussion. One notable difference in the German and American patterns of response to this situation was that the Germans used the verb ziehen (to be drafty) in 57 percent of their responses, whereas none of the Americans used its English equivalent. The phrase Es zieht mir (It is drafty for me) would probably not be in the repertoire of second or third year American students of German. Germans are reputed to have a superstition about "unhealthy train air." It was expected that their response to this situation would be more forceful than that of Americans, who share no such superstition. Such was the case. In contrast, a pattern of politeness dominated American responses, as can be seen by the repeated use (63 percent of responses) of the polite introductory remark "Would you mind if...." Only two German respondents used the phrase Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen, wenn... (Would it matter to you, if...).

All nine American respondents demonstrated syntactical competency to deal with this situation in German. Using the models dürfen, möchten, wollen, and können, they requested in various ways that either the speaker or the addressee close the window. There were two attempts to Germanize English words: die Brise for "the breeze" and Minden Sie? for "Do you mind?" The only other grammatical errors occurring were the use of a past participle instead of an infinitive in Verzeihung, darf ich bitte das Fenster geschlossen? and the common Anglicism Ich bin kalt for Mir ist kalt.

Problems of a grammatical nature, therefore, were minimal, and in this situation, the American students of German only demonstrated a failure to use the verb ziehen in its meaning "to be drafty." Ziehen is usually taught to most beginners in German as a strong verb meaning "to pull." Since it was employed by 47 percent of the native Germans responding to this situation, it would seem that the meaning "to be drafty" should also be treated in introductory courses.

Interestingly enough, both native Germans and American students of German were rather blunt in their German remarks, whereas the Americans were predominately polite in their native tongue. The

high-frequency expression "Would you mind" can be rendered into German as Würde es Ihnen etwas ausmachen. This phrase was used by two native Germans but did not appear in any of the responses of American students.

Below is a complete list of the American students' responses to this situation:

1) Entschuldigen Sie mich, aber darf ich das Fenster zumachen?
2) Bitte, darf ich das Fenster schliessen?
3) Entschuldigen Sie mir. Finden Sie nicht, dass es kalt ist? Ich möchte das Fenster schliessen.
4) Ich will das Fenster schliessen, bitte.
5) Stört es Sie, wenn ich das Fenster schliesse? Die Brise ist sehr kalt.
6) Bitte! Können Sie das Fenster schliessen?
7) Ich möchte gern das Fenster schliessen. Ich bin kalt. Minden Sie?
8) Verzeihung, darf ich bitte das Fenster geschlossen? Das Wetter is schwer.
9) Möchten Sie bitte das Fenster zumachen?

3. FRENCH

A. Situation #1 (expected response: casual key)

Pour s'amuser Gilbert porte des cravates excentriques. Vous le rencontrez par hasard et il porte une de ses célèbres cravates. Vous faites une remarque sarcastique au sujet de sa cravate!

(As a joke, Gilbert usually wears very colorful, striking ties. You run into him, and he has one of his famous [illegible]es on. You make a sarcastic remark about his tie.)

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Where did you get that tie?	4	13
2) I like your tie.	4	13
3) Where did you find (steal) it (that one)?	3	10
4) Have you gotta volume control (dial) on that thing (tie)?	2	7
Miscellaneous	18	60

Patterns of Native French (N-27)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Encore une nouvelle (une de ces nouvelles) cravate(s).	2	7
2) Guignol (clown, carnaval, Mardi Gras)	4	15
3) Miscellaneous	21	78

Discussion. Although this situation is designed to elicit a sarcastic comment, the explanation that Gilbert wears his famous ties as a joke indicates that there will be good humor in the exchange.

There is a distinct lack of patterning in the responses of the native French students. Fifteen percent made reference to some sort of costumed, theatrical event: Voilà Guignol!, Tu as l'air d'un clown, Carnaval, tu connais?, On se croit au Mardi Gras. Two respondents used the expression Encore une nouvelle cravate (Another new tie!). But beyond these two groupings, the responses were stamped with the originality that comes only when one is at home in the language.

Flashes of humor are evident in such native French comments as Ah, le petit fils de Picasso! (Ah, Picasso's grandson!), Tu les trempes dans des pots de peinture tes cravates? (Do you dip your ties in paint pots?), Tu concours pour le prix des horreurs 1974?, (Are you running for the Horror Prize of '74?), and Ta cravate ressemble au papier qui recouvre les murs de mes W.C. (Your tie looks like the wallpaper in my bathroom.).

American students of French made a valiant effort to inject humor into their responses, but their only recourse was to translate American joking remarks directly into French. Even then, errors in grammar or usage frequently marred the effect. One university student asked, Qui a allumé les lumières? (Who turned on the lights?).

Another commanded, Esteignez ta cravate un peu! (Turn off your tie a little). A third commented, Gilbert porte une jaune banan poúr une cravate (Gilbert is wearing a yellow banana for a tie). One high school student translated the frequently heard American remark, "Wait, let me get my sunglasses," into Un moment. Je voudrais chercher pour mes lunettes de soleil. Other high school students translated the American idea of "You're lit up like a Christmas tree" as Es-tu un l'arbre de Noël?, Votre cravate resemble un arbre de Noël mais maintenant le saison est l'été, and Vous ressemblez un cadeau de Noël.

An apparent difference in American vs. French expression of sarcasm is seen in the fact that the most popular American expression, "I like your tie," was not used by a single French respondent. Thirteen percent of the American students who responded to the questionnaire in English used this formula. Seventeen percent of the American university students responding in French translated the familiar American pattern into French: "J'aime votre cravate," "J'aime ton tie," and "J'aime sa cravate." One high school student gushed, "Je juste amour ta cravate!"

An even larger number (29 percent) of the American students responding in French described the tie itself, using adjectives commonly taught in beginning courses: une belle cravate (a beautiful tie), très, très bonne (very, very good), très jolie cravate (very pretty tie). The native speakers of French did not have to plod so heavily. They leaped the "sar-chasm" with spirit: Démentiellement génial, ta cravate (Madly inspired, your tie), Là, c'est le bouquet (That tops everything), Pas mal, un peu voyante, mais pas mal (Not bad, a little loud, but not bad), Cette merveille! (What a marvel!).

Noticeably absent from the American responses were the introductory exclamations which served to lighten the French comments, such as Eh bien, Dis donc, Tiens, Dis moi, Alors, Pas possible, Ah, la voilà, Oh, écoute!, Bah!, Ça va, and Ben! Seventy-four percent of the native French respondents began their comments with one of these exclamatory clichés. American students were woefully equipped in this respect. Only two students made an attempt, mustering the rather pedestrian Bonjour, Gilbert and Salut, Gilbert.

As might be expected, French students' responses contained examples of idiomatic and slang usage which would not likely occur in American student replies: Oh, le beau minet! (Ah, what a cute guy!), On ne sent plus! (You're too much!), and Tu es sur ton trente-et-un! (You're dressed to kill!).

More interesting from the standpoint of cross-cultural comparison are the examples of French sarcasm phrased with that je ne sais quoi which stamps them as unmistakably French: Il y a d'autres moyens pour s'affirmer! (There are other ways to assert yourself!), On a peur de passer inaperçu (You're afraid of going unnoticed), Toujours aussi raffiné? (As elegant as ever?), Y'en a qui ont l'art d'être discret (There are those who have the knack of being discreet), and the more acid Je sais bien que c'est une façon de te faire remarquer, mais tu pourrais le faire avec un peu plus de goût (I know that it's a way to attract attention, but you could have done it with a little more taste).

Summary. It is evident that such paralinguistic features as humor and sarcasm are among the last elements of language to be acquired by the language learner. The need for a systematic

attempt to teach registers of language is well illustrated by the responses of the American students of French. To formulate the comment Votre cravate est stupide! (Your tie is stupid!), as did one student, shows an inability to supply either humor or sarcasm and leaves a residue of ill will where none was intended.

B. Situation #2 (expected response: deliberative key)

Votre ami Martine vous doit 50 F et semble l'avoir oublié. Vous avez besoin de l'argent et vous lui rappelez sa dette avec tact!

(Your friend, Martine, owes you 20 dollars [francs] and has seemingly forgotten it. You need the money now and remind her tactfully of it.)

English Patterns of Native Americans (N-30)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) I need some money (the money).	9	30
2) I hate to ask you (mention it)...	2	7
3) Don't I owe you $20?	2	7
4) I'm in a bind.	2	7
5) Miscellaneous	16	53

Patterns of Native French (N-27)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Tu pourrais...(me rendre, me rapporter, me rembourser, me passer)	10	37
2) Avoir besoin d' (argent)	8	30
3) Ne pas avoir de sous	5	19
4) Prêter	5	19

French Patterns of American College Students (N-24)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Avoir besoin de	9	33

French Patterns of American High School Students (N-13)	Times Appearing	Percentage
1) Avoir besoin de	4	17

Discussion. The situation calls for the speaker to express a need under slightly embarrassing circumstances and to phrase a tactful request.

Native speakers of French as well as American students of French made consistent use of the phrase J'ai besoin de (I need). But whereas the native speakers were able to go on from there, cushioning their request with tact and reason, the American students of French were frequently at a loss as to how to proceed. Even the familiar avoir besoin de posed problems in grammaticality, resulting in such forms as J'ai besoin de l', Je suis in besoin de, J'ais besoin une, and J'ai besoin le.

The pattern most frequently used by the French was Tu pourrais...? (Could you...?), a conditional form of the verb which serves to soften the request. No American student used this form, although four students used the verb pouvoir in the present tense. The use of the conditional to indicate courtesy did not seem to be a ready part of the American students' communicative stock.

Also lacking, from the standpoint of vocabulary, were the terms for "borrow," "lend," and "owe." Although four American students wrote the word "borrow" in English, none knew the French equivalent, emprunter. And while 19 percent of the French respondents used the verb prêter (lend), only one American student included it in his response. Three Americans used the present tense of devoir (owe), and others wrote in the word in English. But no native speaker of French used devoir in the present tense; in fact, the verb was used only once, and then it was softened, to Tu ne me devais pas...? (Didn't you used to owe...?). The American approach Tu me dois 20 dollars (You owe me 20 dollars) was evidently considered too blunt to the French when under instructions to be tactful.

A similar vocabulary problem arose with a term for "return" (the money). Native French chose most frequently to use rendre (22 percent), but rapporter, passer, and rembourser were also given. Three American students resorted to retourner, influenced by the English "return"; the others avoided the verb completely.

A hesitancy to broach the subject was evident in both native French and American student responses. Some kind of linguistic ice-breaker was used at the beginning to give the speaker a moment to gather his courage.

American students were limited to the use of the nominative of address: "Martine,...." One-half of the college students and 55 percent of the high school students began their response in this way. The French, on the other hand, had access to a rich assortment of openers: Dis, Dis donc, Hé, Martine!, Ah, là là!, Au fait, Martine, Ecoute, Martine! An entrée gained, they seemed to slide more easily into their requests.

In another attempt to be tactful, many students supplied a reason for the need to ask for money. Here the Americans were again at a disadvantage: only three college and one high school student made this effort. This contrasts sharply to the 48 percent of the native French who offered a rational excuse for making the request. Some spoke deprecatingly of their financial condition: Je suis fauché, Je suis à sec (I'm broke); Je n'ai pas de ronds (I don't have a cent); or J'ai plus un sou dans mon cochon rose (I don't have a penny in my piggy bank). Others invented logical excuses: a lost billfold, a purchase to make, a brother's birthday, the desire to buy a drink or a subway ticket, or the need to spend the night at a hotel.

The native speakers used other subtle ways to express their discomfort: Je ne voudrais pas jouer le Père Grandet, mais... (I wouldn't want to play the role of the miser, but...), Excuse-moi de te demander ça, je n'aime pas beaucoup poser ce genre de question, mais... (Forgive my asking this--I hate to ask this kind of question, but...).

That the American students wanted to communicate the same idea but were hampered by lexical poverty is illustrated in one student's effort: Je n'aime pas to bring this up, mais.... Others struggled with such solutions as J'ai peur que je l'ai envie and Si'il te plait, peux-tu donner moi ce que tu sais? (Please, can you give me you-know-what?). Two were driven to the inappropriate request, Voulez-vous d'argent maintenant? (Do you want money now?). Another's effort at tact was reduced to As-tu l'argent? J'ai le besoin. (Have you the money? I have the need). And one's frustration level boiled over with a perfect ugly-Americanism: Je n'ai pas du tact. Donnez-moi mon argent (I don't have any tact. Give me my money).

Summary. This social situation is embarrassing in both French and American cultures, and members of both cultures try to approach it with subtlety. American students of French, however, often find themselves without the requisite vocabulary to handle the situation with finesse. In fact, 17 percent of the college students were unable or unwilling to attempt a response of any kind.

Application

Discussion on the importance of social situation in communication, identification of situations, collection of responses from native speakers, and analysis of these responses all serve only as preparatory steps to the creation of instructional materials and appropriate learning activities. The teacher frequently is presented with information without any hint as to its application to the classroom. Given below, therefore, is a sample lesson which suggests how the idea of social situation and its effect on language use can be taught.[9] The lesson is given in English and is directly applicable to TESOL classes, but it also serves as a guide for the design of lessons in other languages. The material is appropriate for intermediate or advanced levels. Parenthetical statements represent options.

Sample Lesson

A. Read (listen to) the social situation until you are certain you understand what the speaker is supposed to say to whom.

Situation

In an overcrowded bus an old lady is standing in the aisle beside your seat. You feel a little guilty about letting the elderly person stand while you remain seated. You rise and offer her your seat.

B. Identify the two responses below which are appropriate in this situation.

Alternate responses

1. Here, Grandma, take a load off your feet.
2. Excuse me, would you like to sit down?
3. Please, take my seat.
4. Madam, would you do me the honor of taking my seat?
5. Sit!

C. You should have identified items (2) and (3) as the correct responses. Suggest why responses (1), (4), and (5) are inappropriate in this situation.

D. Compare your ideas with the explanations given below.

Reasons for inappropriateness of responses

Response 1 - The overfamiliarity indicated by the usage of "Grandma" is an insult. "Take a load off your feet" could be used among friends in certain

situations, but hardly in this setting with an elderly stranger.

Response 4 - This response is inappropriately formal and could be interpreted as feigned servility.

Response 5 - A somewhat distraught mother might command her children to be seated in this fashion. Such abrupt commands are also used by animal trainers.

E. Listen to the teacher (the tape) and repeat the correct responses. Memorize these responses.

F. Read (listen to) the dialogue below which is set in the social context of the situation you have already read.

Dialogue

Helen - Joe, the old lady standing beside you almost fell on that last curve.

Joe - Hm, really?

Helen - Offer her your seat!

Joe - Why? She's okay. Besides, I paid for my seat and I'd rather sit here beside you.

Helen - Joe, you're terrible!

Joe - Okay! Okay! (He rises and addresses the lady.)

Joe - Excuse me, would you like to sit down?

Lady - Oh, thank you, young man. That's very kind of you.

Alternative Response

Please, take my seat.

G. One of the two responses you have learned is included in the dialogue. Substitute the other appropriate response you have learned for this one.

H. Select one of the three inappropriate remarks and write in [the foreign language] a brief conversation in which this remark would be acceptable.

I. Team up with two other students and practice saying the dialogue by taking turns playing each role. Prepare to perform the dialogue before the class.

Through material and activities of this sort, the learner is confronted with the effect of the social situation on language use. By discriminating between inappropriate and appropriate responses the student develops an awareness of the need to be selective in phrasing foreign language utterances.

The social situation is introduced initially in prose form and then brought to life through a short dialogue. The student first participates in the dialogue by supplying alternative responses and later by acting out the entire dialogue with fellow students. The process in step (H) of creating a brief original conversation reinforces the discriminatory abilities of the student. He is thus made more acutely aware of when it is acceptable to say what to whom.

Recommendations

The effect of social situat ı on language usage is of obvious importance to anyone concer with sensitivity in communication. Yet a collection of respons from among students across four languages signals that this phen menon is a neglected concern of foreign language teaching. The following suggestions, therefore, are offered for consideration:

1. Acquaint students with verbal taboos and concepts of courtesy, tact, sarcasm, and humor that are widely held in the target culture. If there are stereotyped expectations, teach them. Obviously more research needs to be done in this area so that generalizations may be made and validated, but what we already know should be put to use.

2. Teach the vocabulary necessary for expressing emotions (e.g., appreciation, regret, amusement, respect, or astonishment) which frequently come into play during communicative exchange.

3. Teach students the use of attention claimers, audible hesitations, and other linguistic fillers (e.g., the equivalent of our "Hey," "Say," "Uh, I was wondering if . . . ," "You know, Bill, I . . . ," or "I was just thinking . . ."). These are easy to learn, but knowing <u>when</u> to use them appropriately takes training. When mastered, they can be sprinkled throughout a conversation to keep ideas rolling in an easy, informal fashion. Without them, stiffness and formality prevail even when vocabulary and grammar are used correctly.

4. Teach the paralinguistic aspects of language that must be used in addition to vocabulary if emotion is to be expressed congruently: intonation patterns, stress, pitch, etc.

5. Develop materials dealing with communication across keys common to everyday language usage--primarily casual and consultative. It is imperative that our students be given an awareness of the impact that such variables as speaker role, listener role, subject, and setting have upon language. They should also be aware, however, that most cultures have evolved social formulae which can be used appropriately in many situations, provided that the linguistics matrix is the same. It is these formulae which can be taught as verbal clichés to our students.

For example, under the situational heading "expression of sympathy" a student of English can learn "I was so sorry to hear . . . ." This cliché is an acceptable expression of sympathy regardless of role relationships or situational content. Its versatility is illustrated as follows:

	that]	you lost your job, you flunked the test, your house burned down, your dog ate poison, Alice and Sam broke up, the bill didn't pass
I was so sorry to hear]		
	of]	the jury's verdict, the explosion, the robbery, your aunt's death, your son's accident, your mother's illness, your recent misfortune, your bad luck, your trouble

Equipped with this cliché, the speaker can finish his utterance in as simple or as complicated a manner as his mood decrees or his verbal fluency allows. The important thing is that he enters the communicative exchange with confidence because he knows an "expression of sympathy" formula which can be used to preface any more specific utterance.

With these remarks in mind, the following social situations--in addition to the eight already given in this paper--are suggested for further development of materials in the foreign language.

Social Situations

Apology for giving offense: An acquaintance of yours approaches you and a couple of your friends in front of the library. He has apparently just had a haircut and his hair looks terrible. You make a joke about his haircut that he doesn't seem to appreciate. A little while later you are alone with him and apologize for the remark.

Apology for forgetfulness:	At a party, you have been introduced to someone but didn't catch his name. After conversing with him for a while, you are approached and greeted by some old friends. Introductions are in order, but you have to admit not knowing the name of the man with whom you have been talking.
Apology for clumsiness:	You are at a party conversing with a very attractive lady when you accidentally spill some of your drink on her shoes. You apologize for this.
Offer of assistance:	On a busy downtown sidewalk, an old man with a cane stumbles and falls. You offer him some assistance.
Expressing solicitude:	Your friend has been working long hours and looks very haggard. You are concerned about her and express this concern.
Expressing irritation:	You need to make an important phone call and have been waiting outside a public phone booth for five minutes while two ten-year-old boys are talking on the phone and playing. You finally lose your patience, and, getting their attention, you let them know that they are transgressing the rules of social custom.
Expressing suspicion:	Upon returning to your hotel room in the evening, you notice the porter locking your door. He becomes obviously nervous when he sees you, and you ask him for an explanation.
Expressing innocence:	You are examining some glassware in an antique store when a stack of dishes a few feet from you suddenly crashes to the floor. The proprietor hurries down the aisle, greatly upset and obviously hostile. You hasten to assure him that you are innocent of any responsibility for the disaster.
Polite refusal (of an invitation):	You already have plans for the afternoon when an acquaintance invites you over for coffee at four o'clock. You decline the invitation.

Polite refusal (of an offer of food):	You are a dinner guest and have eaten all you want, but your hostess keeps trying to encourage you to have more. You are afraid that she will think you don't like the food, but you absolutely cannot eat another bite. You refuse her urgings.
Enthusiastic acceptance:	The father of your good friend is taking his family camping in the mountains. He invites you to join the outing, and you accept with pleasure.
Forgiveness and reassurance:	You gave an acquaintance of yours some money to buy something for you on his trip to the city. When you see him again he apologetically returns your money and admits forgetting the favor. You forgive him and assure him that it is of no consequence.
Terminating a contact:	A particularly talkative acquaintance of yours has stopped you on your way to make an important phone call. You don't want to offend him, but you must cut the conversation off and go place the call.
Expressing disinterest:	You are approached on the street by a student who is eagerly trying to convince you to vote for his favorite candidate in the coming election. You have no interest in either the candidate or the election and make your attitude known.
Expressing perplexity:	An acquaintance whose esteem you value has turned very cold and formal in his relationship toward you. You can think of no reason for this attitude and express your bewilderment to him.

It becomes obvious that there is really no end to the number of social situations which can be delineated. A more important task is to find out what language the native speaker employs as he reacts to these situations and to make it available to the classroom teacher in the form of valid instructional materials. Hopefully, the suggestions offered in this paper will serve to interest other members of the profession in pursuing this goal. More important, however, is the end result--that of teaching the kind of language that takes social situation into consideration. Without this, we are withholding a language component which is crucial to communication.

NOTES

[1]Joshua Fishman, Sociolinguistics, A Brief Introduction (Rowley: Newbury House, 1971), p. 45.

[2]Christina Bratt Paulston, "Linguistic and Communicative Competence," TESOL Quarterly, 8 (December, 1974), 351.

[3]Nelson Brooks, Language and Language Learning (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1960), p. 87.

[4]R. Lakoff, "Language in Context," Language, 48 (1972), 907-27.

[5]H. A. Gleason, Jr., Linguistics and English Grammar (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 355-56.

[6]William R. Cheek, "Identification of Social Situations and Appropriate German Responses for Use in the Development of Instructional Materials," unpublished dissertation, University of Georgia, 1974.

[7]F. Eppert, "Die Forderung nach Sprech- und Situationsüblichkeit zu theoretischen Begründung and terminologischen Klärung," IRAL, 9 (1971), 362-63.

[8]The reader should be aware of the fluidity of boundaries between keys. The native speaker himself selects intuitively the key that he will use. For a discussion of the social environment which triggers each key, see: H. A. Gleason, Jr., Linguistics and English Grammar (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963).

[9]For suggestions on other activites, see: Paulston, Note 2 above.

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